

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

**CABINET MEETING
TUESDAY, 13 FEBRUARY
2024**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE HELD ON
TUESDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2024 AT 1000 HOURS IN COMMITTEE
ROOMS 3&4, COUNCIL HOUSE, VICTORIA SQUARE, BIRMINGHAM, B1
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PRESENT: - Councillor John Cotton, Leader in the Chair

Councillor Nicky Brennan, Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities
Councillor Liz Clements, Cabinet Member for Transport
Councillor Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness
Councillor Majid Mahmood, Cabinet Member for Environment
Councillor Karen McCarthy, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families
Councillor Robert Pocock, Interim Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care
Councillor Saima Suleman, Cabinet Member for Digital, Culture, Heritage and Tourism
Councillor Sharon Thompson, Deputy Leader of the City Council

ALSO PRESENT:-

Councillor Robert Alden, Leader of the Opposition (Conservative)
Councillor Roger Harmer, Leader (Liberal Democrat)
Professor Graeme Betts, Director, Adult Social Care (DASS)
Richard Brooks, Director, Strategy Equalities and Partnerships
Deborah Cadman, Chief Executive
Craig Cooper, Strategic Director of City Operations
Katy Fox, Director of People Services
Fiona Greenway, Interim Finance Director and Section 151 Officer
Paul Langford, Strategic Director, City Housing
Alan Michell, Head of Service School Admissions, Attendance, Exclusions and Pupil Tracking
Marie Rosenthal, Interim City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
Jo Tonkin, Assistant Director, Partnerships Insight and Prevention
Errol Wilson, Committee Team Leader
Spencer Wilson, Interim Head of Service – Employment and Skills

NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

300. The Chair welcomed attendees and advised, and the Committee noted, that this meeting will be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Public-I microsite ([please click this link](#)) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.
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APOLOGIES

301. An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Brigid Jones for her inability to attend the meeting. Paul Kitson, Strategic Director of Place, Prosperity and Sustainability.
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DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

302. The Chair reminded Members that they must declare all relevant pecuniary and other registerable interests arising from any business to be discussed at the meeting.

If a disclosable pecuniary interest is declared a Member must not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless they have been granted a dispensation.

If other registerable interests are declared a Member may speak on the matter only if members of the public are allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless they have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', Members do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that they have an interest.

Any declarations will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

MINUTES

303. **RESOLVED: -**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2024, having been previously circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

EXEMPT INFORMATION – POSSIBLE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

As there were no reports with an exempt or private appendix, the Chair advised that the public meeting would carry on to consider the recommendations.

304. **RESOLVED:–**

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That, in accordance with Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of those parts of the agenda designated as exempt on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information.

UPDATE ON COUNCIL TAX SETTING FOR 2024/24

The Leader introduced the item and advised that the City Council was currently awaiting the Government's response for exceptional financial support which the Department for Levelling Up Communities and Housing (DLUCH) had confirmed would be received during the week commencing the 26 February 2024. He highlighted that the Government had advised that until we got this response we could not set a budget. Therefore we will not be discussing the budget papers today as originally planned and will reconvene a Cabinet meeting on Tuesday 27 February 2024. As a result, the City Council's Budget meeting has been delayed by one week from Tuesday 27 February 2024 and will now be held on Tuesday 5 March 2024. This report sets out that change in the timetable.

Councillor Harmer commented that he was happy with the turnaround in the provision of a telephone number for those people with a single person discount and that it was hoped this was borne in mind for future communications with residents in terms of their Council Tax arrangements. Councillor Harmer then referred to paragraph 3.4 of the report and commented that it was noted that for completing quality assurance that the time period was now two days and that there was no contingency for any failures. He enquired what would happen if there was a major issue identified in terms of the quality assurance.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families commented that it was fascinating concerning the process that was shown in the report and that it showed the work that had been gone into in send out the Council Tax bills. This reminded us how grateful we needed to be to those officers who had to completely reorder the schedule in order to meet the new timetable. In that light it was hoped that DLUCH could understand the importance of getting the confirmation to us so we could operate on this new timeline and complete the process as set out in the report.

The Interim Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care noted Councillor Harmer's comments concerning consultation and stated that it was clear under paragraph 4 that where consultation was needed as part of the budget process implementation that would be carried out and the public would be engaged. The opportunity for residents to have their say as part of the process of delivering this budget was well planned in the forthcoming Municipal Year.

The Finance Director and Section 151 Officer noted Councillor Alden's request concerning he letters sent by the Council and advised that in terms of the publication of the two letters the contents of those would be delivered in the

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budget report. All of that information will be open and transparent to allow the budget to be set.

The Finance Director and Section 151 Officer further noted Councillor Alden's comments concerning the draft budget and advised that in terms of other budgets from her perspectives we were aware that we had the issue with our ERP system and that we had a problem in coming to terms with the 2023/24 base budget and the state that was in. From that we had to rebuild our budget base and we had been quite open about that through all of the reports to Cabinet every month and we will be reporting fully for the report that was to be published for the 27 February 2024. Everything that was flagged would be considered to give assurance to Cabinet and others. We would ensure that we start the 2025/26 process at the end of March 2024 to ensure we were fully compliant and sooner than we were this year.

305. RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: -

That Cabinet:-

- i. Agreed the update to the dates for Council Tax and Budget setting for the 2024/25 financial year; and
- ii. Agreed to an extraordinary meeting of Cabinet on 27 February 2024 to determine proposals to recommend to Council for the Council's budget and Council Tax for 2024/25.

WMCA GRANT FUNDING: PROVISION OF ENTERPRISE CO-ORDINATOR SERVICES & CAREERS HUB IN BIRMINGHAM

The Deputy Leader introduced the item and drew the attention of Cabinet to the information contained in the report.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families stated that this was a good report and that she was happy to support it. She reminded everyone that we all got a role to play in raising the aspirations of the city's young people. It started in primary school if not in nursery that our children saw a wide range of career possibilities before they even knew that the thing they wanted to do was called a career.

Councillor Roger Harmer stated that he welcomed the report and that he endorsed the comments already made about the importance of this. He added that the report could have benefitted more from the wider context in terms of the high level of youth unemployment that we have in the city which was around twice the national level. Some comments around the factors that had led to that could also be included such as the Covid-19 issues. The trend appeared to be worsening in comparison to the rest of the country. Councillor Harmer further stated that the issues around aspirations were important as it was not just about careers advice but about whole school/child up bringing policy. Some discussion about the broader picture would be welcomed.

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Councillor Robert Alden commented that this was a vital area and we needed to ensure that it did not matter where we grew up in the city that we were confident that we could have aspirations and not be told by people in authority that you could not be able to achieve what you wanted. It was vital that not just through this but through the whole public sector we ensured that everyone was spreading that push and desire to increase the aspiration of people within our city. In terms of the careers aspect of this it provided a vital role, but we also needed to ensure that it was giving the full range of job opportunities. We also needed to ensure that as a Council it was linking into businesses in the city and the region so that children could get an idea that in 10 -15 years' time as they go through the system what job would be available and whether there would be a demand.

The Cabinet Member for Environment stated that when it came to the economy and employment the last few years have been turbulent. The impacts of Covid-19, Brexit, global conflicts and the effects of the disastrous trust in government meant that our young people were entering a world of work that was probably uncertain at any point in living memory. He added that this was the reason he was pleased with the report. It was interesting that there was a special focus being placed upon young people who were economically poor and disadvantaged and who faced other barriers. The Cabinet Member for Environment stated that in his Ward part of which was socially deprived was valuable for students both there and across the city.

Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness referred to Councillor Alden's point concerning the Council's relationship with businesses and stated that our young people needed to know through those businesses and large employers what was available to them. She added that the report was welcomed and that she had spent some time speaking with young people during Birmingham's Housing Week. For many of them there was an absence of choice and information. They did not have any idea about the number of job opportunities in housing which was huge. Anything we could do to ensure young people had the right advice at the right time was hugely important. This meant working with all our partners and telling the coherent story about the value of working in Birmingham.

The Deputy Leader stated that the Members' comments would be taken on board that she understood what it meant in terms of careers advice as she was told that the best she could do was to become a secretary. She added that it was important that we put more into the individual and what their desires were and see beyond the possibilities and give them the hope that they may not have seen. The Deputy Leader stated that she took onboard his comments about the Council's relationships with businesses as there were a number of SMEs and a lot more innovations since Covid-19 as well as a lot of online and different ways of working. It was important that we channelled people into those areas etc. We have more to do in terms of building those relationships with the wider business sector and the opportunities that might come from the corporate world. We also needed to remind them that they were not just here to deliver business but that they were here to serve the people of the city and for those to be the beneficiaries of some of the jobs and opportunities that they have.

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Regarding Councillor Harmer's comments on having more context in the report the Deputy Leader advised that she would be having an all-Member briefing around the jobs and skills area so that more information could be given to ensure that Members were equipped going back into their Wards and speaking with people on a local level as it was important that this be taken away from the centre and back into communities.

The Interim Head of Service – Employment and Skills addressed the theme in the room around linking employment and investment opportunities with careers opportunities and jobs. That was where the work of the Careers Enterprise Company differed from the traditional Careers Service. It made that specific link, it linked to growth sectors, developed models to get information, worked closely with schools and they had taster sessions. Bringing that work more closely into the Council's activities and aligning it more closely with the Careers Service activities we could start to integrate that into our broader offer and have that employment and employment opportunity focussed provision linked into our service. After the demise of Local Enterprise Partnerships there was a real gap in the market in this area. We had the opportunity to start to address that and to build on that in subsequent years.

The Chair commented that it was good to hear the collective commitment to ensured that we were not just preparing young people for jobs but for long-term careers. It was hoped that this funding makes that difference we needed to see.

306. RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: -

That Cabinet:-

- a) Approved for Birmingham City Council to enter into an Agreement with and accept the grant funding from WMCA for the Careers & Enterprise Company provision of Enterprise Co-ordinator Services in Birmingham;
- b) Authorised, in respect of BEP - for a negotiated procedure of contracts without competition to commence in accordance with the Procurement and Contract Governance Rules;
- c) Approved award of contract following negotiations conclusion. To prevent further contracting delay and agreed that delegated approval to the Deputy Leader could be permitted at pre-procurement stage, rather than requiring a Contract Award Report for Cabinet Approval;
- d) Approved to consequently enter into a back-to-back Agreement with BEP to provide the Careers Hub and Enterprise Co-ordinator Services in Birmingham, subject to and following the satisfactory conclusion of negotiations as above;
- e) Delegated authority to the Deputy Leader to work with the Executive Director for Children and Families, and the Chief Finance Officer, Finance & Governance to accept the funding offer and enter into the Agreements; and

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- f) Authorised the City Solicitor to execute and complete all necessary legal documents to give effect to the above recommendations, including noting the satisfactory negotiation for Contract Award by the Head of Procurement.

WMCA GRANT FUNDING: COMMONWEALTH GAMES LEGACY ENHANCEMENT FUND – PROVISION OF WIDER JOBS & SKILLS IN BIRMINGHAM

The Deputy Leader presented the item and drew the attention of Cabinet to the information contained in the report.

The Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities welcomed the report particularly part C on *Mentor Me* around mentoring disadvantaged young people with mental health issues. This was important as mental health should not be a barrier for any body in being able to access the career or job they would like. The report will help some of our deprived young people to feel like there were jobs in Birmingham for them and that they could help to build a better Birmingham.

Councillor Harmer welcomed the report and that there was a huge blip in the demographics in terms of birth rates peaking 12 – 13 years ago. We will see a lot more young people coming onto the labour market in the coming 10 years and then it will fall significantly thereafter. We needed to be ready for the surge in people coming forward. Councillor Harmer questioned how success would be measured and what was being done to assess it. Sometimes failure informed what we do as successes.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness stated that the report was linked to the previous report and that she was pleased to see a focus on people who were disadvantaged in the city, particularly those who were of the Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) cohort and those experiencing poor mental health.

307. RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: -

That Cabinet:-

1. Approved for Birmingham City Council to enter into an Agreement with and accept funding from WMCA for the Commonwealth Games Legacy (CWGL) Enhancement Fund - Wider Jobs & Skills & Wellbeing activity' in Birmingham and deployment of this funding;
2. Authorised for a negotiated procedure of contracts without competition to commence in accord with the Procurement and Contract Governance Rules. This would provide £324,167.14 funding for an 'all-age Jobs & Skills Hub in deprived localities with a multi service ethos', acknowledging that only one organisation meets the activity provision parameters in Birmingham;

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3. Acknowledged that a waiver approach is being requested from specific elements of the Procurement and Contract Governance Rules for the 'Mentor Me' project. This is below the threshold for Cabinet approval requirement;
4. Approved for award of contracts following the negotiated procedure and waiver of procedure conclusion and to consequently enter into back-to-back Agreements with organisations to provide the project activities following the procedures, as above;
5. Delegated authority to the Deputy Leader to work with the Executive Director for Children and Families, and the Chief Finance Officer, Finance & Governance to accept the funding offer and enter into the Agreements; and
6. Authorised the City Solicitor to execute and complete all necessary legal documents to give effect to the above, including noting the satisfactory Contract Awards by the Head of Procurement.

ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS AND PUBLISHED ADMISSION NUMBERS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITY CO-ORDINATED SCHEME 2025/2026

The Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Families presented the item and drew the attention of Cabinet to the information contained in the report.

Councillor Roger Harmer enquired about the broader context of falling numbers of children of different age groups and how the policy in particular of those numbers of school places related to particularly in the context where a clear majority of primary schools were now academies. He further enquired what role the Council had to ensure that he overall picture of the total number of school places. He further question whether the Council had a role in terms of ensuring that there was a target number of school places relative to the number of children.

Councillor Robert Alden sought assurance where the report had stated that consideration to be given to next year's work to meet the January 2025 Cabinet meeting and whether this would be done so that we did not have any issue going forward.

The Cabinet Member for Digital, Culture, Heritage and Tourism stated that the report showed that we were committed as an authority to fulfil our statutory duties by consulting with our communities to achieve the best outcomes for our children and that we wanted to hear from our communities about important policies and issues. It was important that we did all we could to ensure that the process was clear and easy as possible for parents to navigate.

The Interim Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care stated that the report highlighted the benefit of the consultation process which had produced a productive result for the city.

The Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Families stated that there was a surge in the school population which was moving into the secondary phase. Birthrate was only one of the aspect that we looked at in terms of school places. There were other factors such as the growth in new opportunities in industry and commerce meant that people moved to the city for a whole range of reasons bringing their families with them. All this had to be fed into the sufficiency forecast. The Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Families added that it was intended to bring the Plan to January 2025 Cabinet meeting.

The Head of Service School Admissions, Attendance, Exclusions and Pupil Tracking stated that there was a team that focused on sufficiency, and it will require careful monitoring as had been the case for a number of years. It was more complex than just birthrate as there was a lot of inward and outward migration, but also what was happening in other neighbouring authorities with their sufficiency plan. This was something that needed careful monitoring and scrutiny and that would continue to be the case.

308. RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: -

That Cabinet:-

- a) Approved proposed admission arrangements, including published admission numbers, for community and voluntary controlled schools for the academic year 2025/2026, as set out in Appendices 1A and 1B of the report; and
- b) Approved the proposed scheme for co-ordinated admissions to schools for the academic year 2025/2026, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report.

KEY DECISION PLANNED PROCUREMENT ACTIVITIES (MARCH 2024 – MAY 2024)

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources the Leader presented the item and drew the attention of Cabinet to the information contained in the report.

The Interim Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care noted Councillor Robert Alden's comments concerning the Community Engagement Partners and advised that he along with the Deputy Director of Public Health had looked at the ways in which the categories listed in the report could also cover a wider social spectrum. He added that it was needed to ensured that the partners were engaged across the social spectrum across the city. He gave assurance that the issue was in hand.

The Chief Executive noted Councillor Alden's comments concerning the Programme Management for the Asset Disposal Project and advised that the savings were subject to clear business cases. The Chief Executive stated that we were clear that Programme Management had to contribute to the delivery of the savings and not be part of the costs. The business case was reviewed on

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several occasions, and we were confident that it would not add to the financial burden of the Council.

309. RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: -

That Cabinet approved the planned procurement activities as set out in Appendix 1 of the report and approved Chief Officer delegations, set out in the Constitution, for the subsequent decisions around procurement strategy and contract awards.

NON-KEY DECISION PLANNED PROCUREMENT ACTIVITIES (MARCH 2024 – MAY 2024)

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources the Leader presented the item and drew the attention of Cabinet to the information contained in the report.

310. RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: -

That Cabinet noted the planned procurement activities as set out in Appendix 1 of the report and approved Chief Officer delegations, set out in the Constitution, for the subsequent decisions around procurement strategy and contract awards.

OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

311. No item of urgent business was raised.

The meeting ended at 1042 hours.

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CHAIRPERSON

